THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS CONFRONTING CHRISTIANITY

HAMILTON SCHUYLER

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THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS CONFRONTING CHRISTIANITY

SCHUYLER

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FOUR SERMONS

PREACHED IN TRINITY CHURCH, TRENTON, N. J., ON THE SUNDAYS IN NOVEMBER, 1911

BY THE RECTOR
THE REV. HAMILTON SCHUYLER

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"A religion which cannot face facts or assimilate all real knowledge becomes a superstition. And any change in the intellectual atmosphere demands—not a fresh revelation, but a fresh theology—a fresh presentation of the old creed in new intellectual terms."

CHARLES GORE, *Bishop of Oxford.*

FOREWORD.

These sermons represent an attempt on the part of a pastor to furnish his people with some considerations that might conceivably help them to adjust the old truths of Christianity to the new light which modern learning and criticism are shedding upon Religion, the Bible and the Church.

Following the delivery of these sermons they were published in full in the columns of a local newspaper and appear to have been thus read with interest by many persons. The desire expressed in various quarters that they might be preserved in a more convenient and permanent form is herein met; their republication in the present volume being at the instance of members of the Parish.

The sermons are printed without alteration as originally preached. The sources whence their subject-matter is derived are so numerous that it is impossible even for the author in all cases to identify them. He has not scrupled to borrow here and there a pregnant phrase and even a whole sentence when such seemed to serve his purpose. He desires here generally to acknowledge his obligations to a host of writers, both within and without the Anglican Communion.

H. S.

Advent 1911.

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Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins else the skins burst and the wine is spilled, but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins and both are preserved. St. Matt. ix., 17

THE CRISIS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SERMON I.

THE CRISIS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves.

St. Mark XIV., v. 24.

There are periods in history when the human intellect suddenly finds itself confronted with a new and wonderful experience. Old conceptions of Nature, of Society, of the State and of Religion, are nullified almost instantaneously under the potent spell of some revolutionary event or discovery. In the contemplation of the new ideas thus presented, observers at first stand aghast. People look at each other with a wild surmise, as in the presence of some prodigious calamity. There is widespread confusion, apprehension, terror. The question is anxiously asked as to what this new order means, whether it portends good or evil. The familiar point of view, the ideas which have long been hallowed by tradition and ingrained by custom, having in the light of fresh knowledge ceased any longer to be credible, the spirit tends to lose its balance and to precipitate itself into the void. With the ancient bulwarks swept away and old categories of thought pronounced untenable, there arises a dis-

position to distrust everything and to seek rest in mere negation. But this state of unstable equilibrium is not normal and cannot long be maintained. Gradually the mind accommodates itself to the new truth and finds that, although the outlook has permanently changed, there is no necessity for alarm, that the catastrophe has destroyed nothing that is essential, but rather that a substantial addition has accrued to the sum of human knowledge.

We term such momentous periods crises, and distinguish several as having occurred in the past twenty centuries. Although these crises precipitate themselves suddenly upon the attention of society, they have behind them long histories. They are the products of extended chains of causes which have united to prepare the way for them. No great invention, discovery or revolution stands alone by itself. Though such may appear unheralded, as coming out of a clear sky, this is not the case. The whole course of events has been a preparation for them and their advent merely signifies the inevitable climax. The new planet that swims into the ken of the astronomer does not then for the first time come into existence. Gradually through countless ages its life has been evolving and only when the time is ripe has it presented itself as an object of observation and study. It is after a great event and by the light of its acknowledged effects that students

are able to trace the causes which led up to it and show its inevitableness and its congruity with nature and history. It may be that "coming events cast their shadow before," but if so they are only discerned by a prophetic mind and are hidden from the multitude.

I have said that we recognize several such crises in history. Of these easily the chief was the advent of Christianity. Those to whom the Gospel was first preached must have regarded the message with a mingled feeling of amazement and joy. It must have meant to them a total surrender of former conceptions and a radical readjustment of their intellectual standpoint. For them former things had passed away and all things had become new. Henceforth, the universe presented a fresh aspect and human life was charged with a strange and tremendous significance.

Such another crisis we know as the Renaissance, when the people of Europe awoke to a new intellectual conception of the world. The invention of printing, the discovery of new Continents and the Reformation, three catastrophic events, all the products of this wonderful age, thrilled the aspiring human spirit and gave a fresh zest to living. In contemplating these marvels new energies were let loose, new faculties brought into play, the imagination was stimulated and the intellect emancipated.

A great gulf seemed to separate the past from the present. Men, as they became conscious of the momentous things that were happening about them, must have told themselves that they were veritably living in another world.

Again in the French Revolution, that great social upheaval which sounded the death knell of the existing order in the State, the passing of caste and privilege, and proclaimed the doctrine of the rights of the individual and free popular government, we have an instance of a crisis marking the advent of a new era in political life.

Yet once more in modern times as physical science has established its premises and verified its conclusions, a new element has been introduced into human experience. We are living to-day in a different world from that of our grandfathers. Pretty nearly everything has changed. The whole intellectual outlook has undergone a transformation. So many of the fairy tales of science have come true that we have ceased to wonder any more and are prone to believe there is nothing impossible.

Likewise it seems to me that we are now in the midst of a great crisis in Religion, a crisis which, when its significance is fully apprehended, will result in a totally different conception from that cherished in former days. New views of the Church, of the Bible, of Christian doctrines and institutions are

revolutionizing thought. The process has been going on for the last fifty years or longer, but only in the last twenty has the issue been plainly apparent even to students, and only in the last ten has a knowledge of it sifted down to the people and found expression in their thoughts and attitude.

Many elements have conspired to usher in the new order and bring things to a climax. Among these elements first and foremost is the Evolutionary Hypothesis. This theory first concerned itself with physical life but has gradually widened its scope until it has finally found application to almost all departments of thought. Possibly the truth of the theory has not been demonstrated beyond a certainty, but it seems to explain so much that is otherwise inexplicable that it has succeeded in establishing itself as the most likely method of attaining a knowledge of the facts. Applied to the subject of religion this theory has certainly done very much to justify itself. In conjunction with the study of Comparative Religion and modern methods of historical and literary criticism the result has been to demonstrate the universality of the religious idea and to exhibit the underlying identity of all religious systems. It is no longer permissible to stigmatize the ethnic religions as utterly false, while claiming a monopoly of truth for one only. A study of origins proves the existence of a common basis for all, the presence of uni-

versal elements out of which in accordance with environment and racial traits have been evolved the different types and varieties. Thus the Hebrew religion, which a former age regarded as one totally distinct from all others, is seen to present a close resemblance to the religions professed by neighboring races. In its earlier stages indeed there appears to have been little or nothing to distinguish Hebrew religion from that common to the Semitic race of which Israel was a branch. The same theological conceptions, the same ceremonial and ritual practices are seen to obtain. It is only in the ultimate outcome, after centuries of the evolutionary process, that the religion of the Old Testament is seen to sever itself definitely from the general type and present features that we may term unique.

As with the Hebrew religion, so also in some measure with the Christian which sprang out of it and was its sequel and flower. Christianity is seen to have close affinities not only with Judaism, but also with the paganism of the Greco-Roman world. Growing up in the soil of the Roman Empire, breathing its atmosphere and exposed to all the influences which affected current thought and action, Christianity absorbed much that was characteristic of the paganism of its day. Its doctrines were interpreted in the thought and language of Greek philosophy. Many of its rites and ceremonies found their mode of ex-

pression after the pattern of the pagan mysteries and many of its institutions reproduced features of the civil government of its day. Just as the ecclesiastical vestments now in use represent a survival of the common dress of the Roman gentleman of the Imperial era, so many ecclesiastical customs present a marked analogy to those in common use in pagan life. The ecclesiastical hierarchy suggests a comparison with the civil dignitaries of the Empire. The Pope may be said to be an evolution of the Emperor in his office as Pontifex Maximus, the Archbishop of the Imperial Proconsul and the diocesan Bishop of the local Prefect.

Of course, these things do not imply that there is nothing unique about Christianity. Far from it. They merely show that the outward forms in which Christianity expressed itself had a close affinity with the common life and atmosphere in which it came into existence and was obliged to develop and maintain itself. The spirit of Christianity was indeed far different from the spirit of paganism, but its intimate relations to it in many outward ways are evident. The conviction of this truth necessarily requires on our part the surrender of many preconceptions and a readjustment of our whole mental attitude.

In the light of the Higher Criticism, the Bible has become a changed book. The literature it embodies

is seen to follow the course taken by other ancient writings and to be subject to the same laws as to composition and authorship. The Bible is not itself revelation, but rather the history of revelation. In its essence it represents the human quest for the Divine. In its limitations and imperfections it bears plain testimony as to its human authorship though its inner spirit reveals the presence of Divine Guidance. Its inspiration lies not in its supposed infallibility but in the gradual unfolding in history and individual lives of a supreme purpose and design. There need be no fear that criticism will ever alter the great central verities of religion. Faith has nothing to dread. God's nature, the life and character of Christ and the operations of the Holy Spirit are eternal truths that lie forever outside the province of criticism. Our conceptions of the methods of revelation may have to be changed, but nothing that is really vital need be surrendered.

As with the outward aspect of religion so also with its inward perception by the individual. The phenomena of religious psychology have been carefully studied with the result of showing that the votaries of all religions exhibit alike the same general sensations. Conversion, the yearning for mystical fellowship with the Divine, spiritual exaltation and ecstasy, faith, hope, charity, and, in fact, the whole catalogue of religious sentiments that we are apt to

deem exclusively Christian, have their analogues in other religious systems and in every age. The phenomena of revivalism are demonstrated to possess a physical basis and to have exhibited themselves at intervals in all religions. Personal piety cannot be exclusively predicated of either Judaism or Christianity. Hymns, litanies and prayers breathing the purest and loftiest emotions have survived to us from the most ancient times. Future judgment, purgatory, hell and heaven, demons and angels, are categories of religious thought almost everywhere. Even traces of an incarnation and atonement find a place in some pagan cults and the salvation of the individual is thought of also as conditioned upon sacramental union with the deity. Now, the general resemblance of Christianity to other religions ought not to be a stumbling block to faith, but, on the contrary, ought to have a reassuring effect as showing that Christianity instead of presenting an isolated spiritual phenomenon unites in itself all the elements that distinguish the universal religious consciousness, lifting them up to the noblest level and impressing upon them its own peculiar sanctions. That the Spirit of God has been ever in the world witnessing to the truth in many forms and in diverse ways is the firm contention of Christianity. If the theory of evolution be true then we may see in Christianity the culmination and perfect

flower of religion, the fact of its survival proving that it was the fittest to survive and to exercise supreme authority over the conscience and the heart. The unity of the human race is nowhere better evidenced than in the fact that its deepest spiritual experiences prove its possession of a common source, a common fellowship and a common destiny.

What constitutes the present crisis is the fact that in our day the various strands of knowledge and research are being for the first time united in such a manner as to demonstrate that the old ways of thinking about religion are no longer possible but must give way to a new synthesis. We are called upon to readjust our vision, to discard old theories and to take larger and nobler views of religon. To those who have been brought up in accordance with the traditional view, as most of us have, the change involved is so radical that we stand aghast at the prospect. The solid ground seems to be sinking beneath our feet. The ancient walls of our ecclesiastical Jericho seem to be falling down at the trumpet blast of a new Joshua. Our first impulse is to deny any validity to these modern views, to refuse even to listen to the arguments advanced. But this is not wise. Such an attitude cannot long be maintained. It is no use to stop our ears and close our eyes. We have certainly come upon a new and wonderful era in religious thought and can never return to the old

way of thinking. However it may be with certain details of the subject, the general issue has been settled and we shall have to accept it. It is well to remember that Faith is tried, not only by its direct foes, but by an enlargement of human knowledge which will ultimately tend to enrich men's conceptions of God and afford them a firmer basis for their religion.

It is doubtless true that the new point of view is not yet consciously held except by students. The masses, even those fairly well educated, are far from being familiar with it. Yet it has made mighty strides in the past decade and its results are fast sifting down to the intelligence of the majority. Very soon it will become common property. In a great reading age such as this knowledge becomes widely diffused in a very short time. It is of the utmost importance when this truth which now is only dimly guessed at by the laity shall have firmly established itself in the public consciousness that its bearing upon Christianity should also be fully realized. A little knowledge makes for scepticism, whereas a fuller knowledge strengthens faith. A policy of silence is fatal. I am fully convinced that it is the plain duty of the clergy to speak out boldly, otherwise we shall wake up some morning to find ourselves and our teaching discredited in the eyes of an intelligent people. There are signs already

that the laity are vaguely realizing that there is something the matter. In an age of transition such as the present, when the old props are giving way and no new ones are immediately forthcoming, we have the spectacle of indifference and indecision on the one side and anxiety and alarm upon the other. It is a plain matter of observation that people are drifting away from the old moorings. Every religious body is losing ground. The decay of popular Protestantism is apparent. The old shibboleths once so potent arouse no enthusiasm. The preaching of old dogmas leaves the people unimpressed. Theological differences have ceased to divide. It is almost impossible to get up a healthy dispute on controverted subjects. People have lost interest in the issues. Conscious of their weakness the sects are contemplating a combination of their forces. Church attendance has fallen off everywhere and with it as a natural result the problem of maintenance has become pressing. Fewer men are qualifying for the Ministry and many of those in it are suffering from inadequate support and lack of sympathetic lay interest. Indefiniteness is taking the heart out of Protestantism and making its pulpits merely platforms for the teaching of ethical culture or for the propagation of fads and sensationalism.

Modernism is permeating the best intellects in the Roman Communion. The fierce papal condemnation

of it is strangling liberty of thought, stifling discussion and making difficulties for scholarly priests by compelling them to take a solemn oath anathematizing it under penalty of deprivation of office with all the obloquy which that sentence carries with it. On the Continent of Europe the Roman Communion has lost the allegiance of the vast majority of the intelligent laity and in many quarters even the peasants are abandoning it. Its scholars are producing no theological literature of any note and those who do contribute anything of value stand in imminent danger of having their books placed upon the Index and being themselves discredited. In this country the constant gains to the church through immigration serve to conceal the losses sustained among the native population. The imperviousness of the vast majority of the laity to the conclusions of modern scholarship due to their scanty and one-sided education and the ban placed on all religious discussion, serve to keep them in the ranks and to postpone the day of enlightenment. What will happen when the masses once learn the truth of the matter can only be imagined.

The conditions in our own Communion are far from satisfactory. We are suffering in growth and effectiveness. In fact, we seem simply to be marking time. In my opinion, the situation will not tend to improve in the near future, but will grow

for a season steadily worse. I am by no means, however, a pessimist as to the ultimate issue. I am confident that Christianity has not lost its vitality nor will ever be replaced by anything else. Man is above all else religious and will ever choose the highest and best he knows. But the present chaos must first be dissipated. There must be a radical reconstruction and a frank restatement of religion on modern lines. Christianity must be brought into full harmony with the fresh knowledge which the age has acquired. There must be a new orientation. Religious thought cannot permanently follow another channel from that taken by the intellectual forces that are molding present ideas. That this adjustment can be accomplished without much distress and unsettlement is too much to hope. Every crisis is bound to produce such disturbances. In the meantime, until the new order gains general acceptance we must possess our souls in patience, confident that a successful outcome will result. The God who guides the destinies of mankind will surely vindicate Himself and not permit those who trust in Him to be put to permanent intellectual confusion.

I have spoken very frankly because I believed it was my duty to do so. I may add the personal assurance that my own studies in these matters and my own cordial acceptance of the results of modern scholarship and research have left me a sin-

cere believer in the Nicene faith and affected in no whit my personal allegiance to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus only could I rightfully occupy this place and retain any title to address you.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE HIGHER CRITICISM

SERMON II.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND HIGHER CRITICISM.

When Israel was a child. Hos. xi., v. 1.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.

1 Cor. xv., v. 46.

The traditional view of the Bible, that which was almost universally current up to a few decades ago and indeed is largely held in some quarters even to-day, is that of an infallible record containing no errors either as to matters of fact or of moral teaching. In its science, geography, history, philosophy and ethics it was believed there were no mistakes, that upon every subject of which its writers spoke they were prevented by an overruling Providence from making the slightest error. Inspiration was thought of as so affecting the individual writer as to render him merely the mechanical mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. Though the pen was that of the writer the thought and its expression were solely and exclusively those of the Holy Spirit. Men sought to see the whole Bible in every verse. The very letter of Scripture was regarded as directly inspired. Every jot and tittle, what we would call the dotting

of the "i's," and the crossing of the "t's," was held to be divinely caused. To suggest that possibly there might be a mistake in the text of Scripture was enough to raise a storm of protest and righteous indignation. The most ingenious and far fetched explanations were offered for the purpose of harmonizing conflicting accounts. Learned books and weighty treatises were published with the idea of showing that the account of the Creation as given in Genesis was scientifically correct. Joshua's apostrophe to the sun to stand still was held to represent a literal fact in the course of nature, and the cruel and blood-thirsty deed of Jael in murdering Sisera, who had confided himself to her protection, was regarded as an act approved by God Himself. The revengeful feelings of the Israelites for their enemies as expressed in the Psalms and elsewhere were justified as the inspired utterances of the Holy Spirit. "Blessed be he that taketh thy children and throweth them against the stones." "Let the extortioner consume all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor. Let there be no man to pity him nor to have compassion on his fatherless children," which are obviously the curses and maledictions of a bitter and relentless enemy, were regarded as being the utterance of the same Spirit of Love as inspired the writings of the Beloved Disciple.

Instead of taking the Scriptures as they appeared

upon the surface as a collection of ancient writings dealing with sundry religious, historical and moral matters, composed by various writers of different degrees of spiritual culture and ethical development, people were determined to see in them something strained and unnatural. Believing these writings to have been inspired by God it was thought necessary to eliminate from them, as far as possible, the human element. Men failed to remember that the Bible is the Great Book of Humanity and therefore it was to be expected it would show traces upon every page of the human limitations of its authors. Timorous Christians have been thrown into a panic because they have suddenly discovered that the Bible was not exactly what they had been taught to believe it was. Often mistaking what was plainly allegorical and poetic for literal fact, expecting the Bible always to be in accord with the discoveries of modern science, looking for as high a standard of human conduct in the Old Testament as they found in the New, they have been greatly dismayed upon finding that they would be compelled to make a readjustment of their views. It has seemed to them their religion would have to go if it could be proved that the First Chapter of Genesis was not in strict accordance with the facts of geology. Having placed the Bible upon a false pedestal they have trembled for the truth of religion at every effort made to dislodge

it. What they have deemed reverence for the Bible has turned out to be merely the blind worship of a fetich created by their own imagination.

We are fast being emancipated from such a mechanical theory, dishonoring alike to God and human intelligence. According to the modern view of the Bible, the recognition of its imperfections and limitations instead of being a trial to faith is really a great relief from an intolerable burden. We no longer think of apologizing for the errors and inconsistencies which we find in its pages. Nay, we accept them all as necessary constituents of the evolutionary theory in accordance with which we are now compelled to trace the history of divine revelation. We still believe the Bible to be the result of divine inspiration, but our apprehension of the method and significance of such inspiration has undergone a radical change. Perhaps few of us as yet realize how fundamental that change is, how wide is the gulf between the traditional and the modern conception. It will be my object in the present sermons to point this out. I shall be able only to indicate the general trend. I cannot attempt to go into the process whereby the new results have established themselves. It is not possible for the untrained mind to follow the intricate technicalities of the modern critical method.

What I shall aim to do is not to make higher

critics of you, but simply to help you to a point of view to the intent that when that which is known to scholars generally becomes the property of the multitude you may not be easily perturbed or complain that such knowledge has been kept from you by your official teachers.

To disturb traditional conceptions is always an ungrateful task and lays those who attempt it open to the charge of being iconoclasts and undermining simple faith. I am content if need be to suffer such a reproach in the immediate present, being firmly convinced that I am doing nothing less than my plain duty for which some day, if not now, you will thank me. In any event I would not willingly incur the odium expressed in the couplet,

> "Who dares think one thing and another tell
> My soul detests him as the gates of hell."

If anything I shall say has the tendency to disturb faith I deeply regret the fact, but I feel that such disturbance will be only temporary. To shake a person out of his complacency is not necessarily to upset his faith. Such a method may be necessary to bring him to a realization of what religious faith really is and to teach him to find a deeper and better foundation for it in the things which cannot be shaken.

That the traditional view of the Bible is no longer adequate or tenable in view of the flood of light shed upon it by modern scholarship and research, is an assured certainty. The traditional view, the view in accordance with which most of us presumably received our early training, has yielded in the minds of the vast majority of Biblical scholars to that which bears the name of the Higher Criticism. What is the Higher Criticism? It is in a word that method which deals with the literary and historical elements of the Bible in the light of the knowledge derived from results attained in the departments of archæology, linguistic science and comparative religion. It deals with the documents rather than the text of the Bible, strives to fix the dates of their composition and the relations of the various writers to the ages in which they flourished. In other words the Higher Criticism goes behind the text and seeks to discover its origin and source. It checks the results thus reached by knowledge obtained from the study of the phenomena of religious psychology and the laws known to govern the production of other ancient literature. The Higher Criticism is now generally recognized as a science and in spite of the often wild theories indulged in by some who claim its authority, it is no longer a matter of doubt that it has succeeded in establishing its main contentions upon an assured basis. It has passed to-day out of

the realm of uncertain theory into that of well-authenticated fact. Practically all recent dictionaries of the Bible are based upon the results of the Higher Criticism and frankly acknowledge indebtedness to it. It would seem to be merely a question of a short time when the old traditional view of the Bible must give way, even in the minds of the most conservative, to a cordial acceptance of the modern idea.

That the change involved is a radical one is not to be questioned. It is not merely the notion of an infallible record which must be surrendered but the received authorship of the various books and their dates must be widely modified, as must also the historical outlook. Many institutions formerly supposed to have had an early origin must be relegated to a comparatively late period in Hebrew history, and many supposed to be exclusively Hebrew in their character are found to have been derived from other sources. Much indeed which has hitherto passed for literal history is discovered to be myth and legend or history so idealized that it contains only a thin substratum of fact. Not a few of the earlier personalities who are prominent in the narrative are to be regarded merely as ancestral types whose sayings and doings rather reflect the ideas prevailing in later centuries than those belonging to

the ages in which they are supposed to have flourished.

When we consider that the Higher Criticism pronounces the Pentateuch, or rather the Hexateuch which includes the Book of Joshua, a composite collection representing a number of separate documents produced by various writers living from the middle of the Ninth Century B. C. onwards, the whole rewritten, edited and welded together in the form which we now have the books at a much later period, we may form some conception of the revolutionary change involved. If the earlier portions of the Old Testament are assumed to have been put into writing at a period subsequent to the time of David and all that existed before was in the form of oral tradition, we may understand how conjectural is the historical basis for the events recorded. Doubtless the oral tradition represented in the main and in a large way the essential elements of Israel's previous history, but it is impossible to believe that legendary and mythical elements are absent. Indeed the Hebrew mind had very small concern for mere facts. It was only as facts, or what were supposed to be such, were deemed to have a religious significance and could be used to illustrate certain phases of Hebrew thought that they were regarded as important. History in its scientific sense, and as we understand the term, was an unknown thing in the case of all ancient

writers, and it has been proved that Old Testament literature is strictly co-ordinate in this respect to other ancient literature.

Moreover the Law according to Higher Criticism instead of being derived from Moses as a whole was rather the product through natural evolution of centuries of national life. Indeed the Law as it is embodied in the Pentateuch represents a long series of legal enactments, racial customs and ritual observances, finding possibly their germ in some primitive Mosaic legislation but otherwise following the strict line of development elsewhere observed. Thus the Ten Commandments in the form in which we now have them were certainly formulated at a date many years after the Exodus, bearing plain evidence upon their face of being the product of a late period of ethical and social development. There are several sets of decalogues discerned by Higher Criticism in the Pentateuch, the earliest of which is concerned mainly with enactments of a ritual and ceremonial character.

That in the whole era preceding the greater Prophets the popular religion differed little from that current among other Semitic tribes is highly probable. The doctrine of the Unity of God was certainly a late development as was also the predication of ethical traits to the Deity. It seems beyond doubt that the Hebrews down to a very late period

in their history were not strict monotheists but believed rather in Jehovah, or Yahweh, as the word is more properly spelled, as a tribal God who was their special deity as other nations equally had theirs who were thought of as ruling over and protecting them. These deities were commonly regarded as exercising authority over certain specific territory. To leave the territory was to put oneself out of the jurisdiction of the god and to forfeit his protection. Thus even as late as the time of Elisha, Naaman the Syrian, after he had been cured of his leprosy by the Prophet of Yahweh, petitioned for two mules' burdens of earth to take back with him to Syria in order that upon this earth in his own land he might worship the God of Israel, which conceivably he otherwise could not do. The reply of Elisha, "Go in peace," would seem to indicate the prophet's acquiescence in this theory.

The distinctive religion of early Israel is to be found in its recognition of Yahweh as its special deity, and its conviction of possessing his exclusive favor. Just at what period Yahweh became the god of the Hebrews cannot be determined with certainty. Although the earliest documents use the name Yahweh and represent him as the creator of the world and as known to the Patriarchs, this is contradicted later where it is asserted in the divine revelation vouchsafed to Moses that this deity then

first made himself known by such name, specifically declaring that as Yahweh he had not revealed himself to the Patriarchs. The view now commonly adopted by scholars is that the worship of Yahweh began at the time of Moses, when, under the stress of their bondage in Egypt, a covenant was entered into between Yahweh and the Hebrews whereby the Hebrews were to take him for their god in return for his favor and protection. The circumstances seem to suggest that Yahweh was the Tribal God of the Kenites, who dwelt in the neighborhood of Mount Sinai. Jethro, the high priest of the Kenites, was the reputed father-in-law of Moses, and it is surmised that through him Moses became acquainted with this deity. The account of the institution of the Covenant makes it plain that it was Jethro who offers the sacrifice on that occasion. Moreover, for centuries afterward, Sinai was commonly regarded as the special home of Yahweh. From thence he was depicted as marching forth to give his people victory. Elijah makes a journey to Sinai for the special purpose of communicating there with him. The conception of Yahweh cherished in pre-prophetic times can be determined in broad outline by the narrative. Yahweh was a god of battles, "The Lord is a man of war." He manifested himself especially in thunder and lightning. Indeed, the accepted word for thunder was "The voice of

Yahweh." He is represented as riding upon the clouds. It was as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night that he is pictured as leading the people through the wilderness. What the Hebrews required in their great emergency was a god who could deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and give them victory over their enemies. There were probably few ethical or moral attributes originally predicated of Israel's God save faithfulness. The Covenant relations which bound the two together was a bargain in accordance with which Israel was to give exclusive worship to Yahweh in return for his aid and protection.

The religion of this period shows the crudest ethical notions. Religion was mainly regarded as among all primitive peoples as a help to secular life. The god was worshipped in return for substantial favors bestowed. We note this specifically in the history of Jacob. "If," he says, "God will be with me and keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give a tenth to thee." Earthly prosperity was what Jacob demanded in return for his acknowledgment of the deity. Yahweh indeed was regarded as punishing offences but they were offences rather against his sovereignty than against the law

of righteousness. Stealing, deceit and treachery were not only condoned but at times even glorified. The wholesale slaughter of enemies was regarded as pleasing to Yahweh, indeed as directly commanded by him.

Dating from the time of the Prophets a great change is discernible in the religion of the Old Testament. Nobler conceptions of God and stricter views of morality gradually began to be held. This era may be assumed to begin with the activities of Elijah and to find its perfect flower in the writings of the Post-exilic Prophets. While Elijah himself may not be supposed to have advanced greatly beyond the enlightenment of his age in his theological conceptions, the significance of his career lies in the fact that it marks the dawn of ethical purity and social justice in the religion of the Yahweh. Following Elijah in the course of a century we have Amos the first to commit his teachings to writing. With him it was that the doctrine of the Divine Unity clearly emerges into light and the character of Yahweh assumes a distinctively moral aspect. The other Prophets in their day enlarged and purified these conceptions and thus firmly impressed upon the nation the noble idea of religion which meets us in its completed form in the writings of the Second Isaiah. Henceforth the God of Israel is recognized as the Sole Creator of the universe, the Supreme Ruler of

the world and the Maker of history. The highest ethical attributes are predicated of Yahweh and His love is thought of as going out to the whole world.

Excepting only the perfect teaching expounded by Christ and exemplified in His Person and Life, it may safely be asserted that the religious conceptions of Israel's greater Prophets have no parallel in the world's history. The spiritual phenomena observed in their teachings are inexplicable on any other hypothesis than divine enlightenment. No other religion than that of the Hebrews has had vitality enough to burst its swaddling clothes and impose itself upon the world. Starting from the crudest beginnings, allied in thought and practice to the other religions existing about it, that of the Hebrews has passed through all intervening stages and has emerged in its developed form of Christianity as alone worthy to have survived. To those who believe that the divine method of working in the world has consistently been along the lines of gradual development, the story of the religious progress of the Hebrews from the lowest forms up to its sublime culmination in Christianity will not seem strange or unnatural. If we are compelled under stress of new methods of criticism to readjust our views of the Old Testament and to see divine inspiration no longer in the letter of Scripture but rather in the history of the race as a whole and especially in the

utterances of certain gifted men, the assurance that the Hebrews were a divinely chosen people and that the Holy Spirit spake through the Prophets will not be lacking. Our reverence for the past will not be diminished because we recognize the crudeness of the beginnings. We shall not despise the infant for its ignorance and weakness since we have been permitted to watch that life ever growing in knowledge and expanding into a strong and intelligent manhood. Personifying the long quest of humanity for the One True God we may adopt the words of St. Paul and apply them to the religious development of the race: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things."

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

SERMON III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels.

2 Cor. IV., v. 7.

That we shall have in some important respects to modify our views as to the New Testament is certain. But as the New Testament was written under entirely different conditions from the Old, appearing at a time strictly within the purview of history and having as its background an era familiar to us from contemporaneous literature, there is not so much need for readjustment. The best modern scholarship recognizes that the first three Gospels were written between the years 60 and 80 A. D. and that they were the authentic production of writers, who, if not themselves direct witnesses of the events they recorded, were certainly close associates and companions of such. It is admitted that some of the Epistles of St. Paul were in circulation by the year 50 A. D., that is only twenty years after the Resurrection, when the majority of Apostles were yet living. Besides this the Church or Christian Society was in full operation as an organized body and it would have been impossible to foist upon it records which were

at variance in any essential particulars with the facts as they had been made known by the direct testimony of living first-hand witnesses. Myth and legend are therefore excluded. That the Gospels bear internal evidence of a composite authorship is true as also that they are in some degree inconsistent with each other in certain statements. It is impossible to construct a harmony of them that is satisfactory. What we have is not a biography of Christ but rather the impression of Him which His first associates received and which was subsequently deepened and clarified by meditation and experience. Repeating orally the story of His life and recalling His teaching and utterances, as they must have done constantly for the enlightenment and edification of their hearers, there would be a tendency in each case to follow a certain beaten path. To one preacher certain classes of events and certain doctrines would seem especially noteworthy and important and to another certain other events and certain other doctrines would have the preference. Out of this oral teaching, as time went on and the need arose of possessing a permanent record which should embody the Apostolic tradition, the Gospels in their written form appeared. That there should be variations and apparent contradictions in the documents is only natural. When two or more men attempt the task of portraying the character, actions and teachings of a celebrated man

whom they all knew differences are bound to appear. No two have the same standpoint, yet all may equally be honest and trustworthy. The personal equation determines the issue.

That we possess in any instance the exact words of Christ in the sense of a verbatim report is a matter of doubt. In the first place the language spoken by Him was Aramaic and the New Testament was written in Greek. Moreover the text as it has come down to us has passed through so many hands and contains so many varying readings that it is unlikely we have an absolute rendering of the original. The oldest manuscript of the Gospels which we possess dates from the Fourth Century. On the other hand that the spirit of Christ's teaching, the spirit as distinct from the letter, has been preserved to us we need not doubt. The freshness and originality of thought which the Gospel teaching reveals prove that its substance must have emanated from one main source and owes little or nothing to the hand of recorders or commentators.

The Gospel according to St. John stands upon a somewhat different basis from the other three. It was written the last of all, probably near the end of the First Century. This Gospel constitutes a special problem. It is evident to all observant readers that it differs widely in the choice of material and in general character from the others. There are more-

over certain wide variations as to important facts in the life of Christ which make it impossible to bring its statements into harmony with the others. The general tone and tenor of the discourses show also a marked difference. It is plain we are here in another atmosphere, an atmosphere colored by Greek thought and particularly showing the influence of the writings of the Alexandrian Platonists. The Prologue to the Gospel is far removed from any trace of the Jewish mind. In many cases it is impossible to tell whether the words are those of Christ or the personal comment of the Evangelist. Even conservative critics admit that the discourses contain a large ideal element, as representing rather the meditations of the writer than the actual sayings of Christ. The theory most in favor is that the book, while containing many historical facts, yet represents as a whole the deep spiritual musings of an old man over experiences from which he is separated by a period of fifty or sixty years. They do not deny that the discourses contain in substance the true teaching of Christ, but assert that they have undergone a process of restatement in other language. If, as I believe, this book is the genuine production of St. John the Apostle written in extreme old age and perhaps through the medium of an amanuensis, then the fact that much in it cannot be harmonized with the earlier Gospels and that the discourses show small resem-

blance in language to them simply tends to prove that St. John had so absorbed the inner spirit of his Master's teaching as to be unmindful of the mere letter. Surely he who as the Beloved Disciple knew most intimately the mind of Christ would be apt to feel himself freed from any slavery to the letter. Indeed it is quite possible to conceive that having made that teaching his own, he should have failed himself to note that he was not employing Christ's very words.

Christ himself wrote nothing. What He did was to impress Himself upon the mind and heart of His associates. The Gospel was not contained in a written message, at least at first. It was not set down in documents but was passed on from living men to living men. Exact quotation was not thought of. The rendering was free. As each hearer absorbed it for himself so he would convey it to others. The Apostles were personal witnesses not writers. They spoke of what they know. They testified of what they had seen. For three hundred years there was no complete canon of the New Testament. Few individuals if any would possess all the writings. The early Fathers of the Church hardly in a single instance quote the exact words of Scripture. They give the sense as we often do without troubling themselves as to the precise language.

That some of the books, such as the Epistle to the

Hebrews and possibly the Second Epistle of Peter and the Apocalypse, were not written by the authors to whom they are commonly assigned may be granted. That these books were received by the early Church and accorded a place in the canon of sacred Scripture is however sufficient to establish their right to be regarded as setting forth true Christian doctrine and as profitable for the spiritual edification of believers. After all it was the Church which produced the New Testament and placed its imprimatur upon it. Christians received the writings upon the testimony of the Church as embodying and summing up the corporate consciousness of the Body to whom the original communication was made and in whom the Holy Spirit was energizing.

If the written Gospels appear in some degree meagre and fragmentary, if many points upon which we desire information are omitted and others are only incidentally touched upon, we have to remember that the Gospels were not primarily intended to teach the Faith, but were rather supplementary to the fuller teaching which was given orally. Moreover we must also remember that the early Church held certain doctrines implicitly and it was not until a later period that the necessity arose for explicit statement. Definition so long as all were in essential agreement was not necessary; it was only later when differences arose that a formal creed was required. It was the

heretics, those who rejected the Apostolic traditions or who placed an interpretation upon them that were subversive of the Faith as commonly taught and understood, who were responsible for bringing the formal creeds into existence.

That the doctrines of the historic Church as we have them to-day are the result of a certain development is apparent, but the development was unquestionably in accord with the original tradition. The primitive Christians found themselves for instance paying divine honors to Christ, thinking of Him, praying to Him and worshipping Him even as they did God the Father. This attitude towards Christ required intellectual justification otherwise those who held it were properly charged with paying divine honors to a man, in other words they were guilty of idolatry. This objection was met by the declaration that Christ was God and as such had ever been regarded, at least subsequent to the Resurrection, by those who had personally known Him. This belief in the Incarnation, held implicitly from the very first, represented the core of the Apostolic tradition; it was the background of all the teaching and constituted the rationale of the Church's life. To abandon it would clearly be to surrender the Faith.

Modern criticism of the New Testament has at least done this for us—namely, it has rendered it impossible to regard the Gospels as presenting Christ

under a rationalistic aspect, what is sometimes called "Liberal Protestantism." A superhuman Christ is absolutely required to explain the New Testament and the attitude of primitive Christianity. We may deny the Deity of Christ but it is only by throwing overboard the declarations of the New Testament and the testimony of the early Church. In that event the whole structure collapses.

The motto of the Protestant sects "The Bible and the Bible only the religion of Protestants" is clearly proved inadequate in the light of modern criticism. Apart from the Church which produced the Scriptures and authenticated them they are unable to stand the weight superimposed upon them. Verbal inspiration is precluded by the facts in the case.

The futility of basing dogmas upon isolated texts of Scripture is apparent. The theological controversies of a past age were carried on by a bandying of texts. Antagonists hurled passages of Scripture at each other in support of the claims which they championed and victory was supposed to rest with those who could marshal the greatest number of so-called "proof texts" in advocacy of the views which they maintained. The most momentous doctrines were often built upon a single sentence, as witness the tremendous assumption of Papal Sovereignty which was supposed to receive divine endorsement in

the words, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."

The trouble with this method was that ingenuity could discover as many passages against a certain doctrine as in favor of it and hence nobody was convinced. With the doctrine of verbal inspiration gone this method of conducting controversy is clearly demonstrated to be useless. Whatever inspiration may mean as applied to the Scriptures it certainly cannot be defined as freedom from verbal inaccuracy. It was the Church, not the Scriptures, of which St. Paul affirmed that it was "the pillar and ground of the truth." The Holy Spirit cannot be thought of as merely or chiefly inspiring the written word. His abiding Presence and Power were promised to the Church, the Christian Society, in its representative and corporate capacity. Under His influence we must think of the Church as producing the New Testament and as proceeding further as the need required to formulate the creeds and establish ecclesiastical order and rites.

The development of doctrines, rites and institutions, as I have said before, was in strict accordance with an original norm. We cannot, I think, appeal successfully to the New Testament alone as furnishing sufficient authority for such an institution as the Three-fold Order of the Ministry, though we may see in its pages traces of this constitution in an inchoate

form. In regard to this matter our own branch of the Church affirms that the primitive character of this institution is apparent from "a diligent study of Holy Scripture and ancient authors." History assures us as a matter of fact that the Three-fold Order of the Ministry was commonly accepted as the normal method of Church government from very early times. Any variations there may have been from this rule were sporadic and contrary to the universal custom.

That the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist were observed from the very first there can be no doubt, though the full doctrine concerning them was a matter of later development, being logically deduced from the teachings of Scripture. Infant baptism cannot be positively proved from the New Testament, but the inference is plain and the universal practice of the Church in the matter cannot be questioned.

Those doctrines, rites and institutions which we find universally accepted by all branches of the historic Church, East and West, and in all ages, may be safely presumed to represent the primitive tradition. Thus the Creed, the two greater Sacraments, the rite of Confirmation and the Three-fold Order of the Ministry all answer this test. There are certain other doctrines, however, which are peculiar to sections of Christendom and which find no warrant

in Scripture or in the primitive Church which we must therefore pronounce erroneous or at least as having no binding power over the Christian conscience. Among such may be mentioned the modern Roman dogmas of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the Sovereignty of the Pope over all Christians and his personal Infallibility. In respect to all these it is quite possible to trace their definite beginnings in history and to understand the conditions under which they came into prominence. Our own protest against them is simply that they have no foundation in primitive Christianity, that they grew up in later times and owe their being to circumstances which we can plainly estimate. Our own branch of the Catholic Church affirms that "no man shall be required to believe as necessary to salvation anything not contained in Holy Scripture or which cannot be proved thereby."

Perhaps a word may be properly said in regard to the miraculous element in the New Testament. There is a disposition in the present age to reject miracles as involving a contradiction of the laws of Nature as scientifically observed. Even in the case of some who profess and call themselves Christians the matter of miracles constitutes a real stumbling block to faith. I have previously stated that modern criticism has demonstrated that a superhuman Christ is demanded by the New Testament and the

attitude of primitive Christianity. This much then we may at least affirm, namely, that the first Christians believed in miracles, that they attributed superhuman powers to Christ and believed that like powers resided in the Church. Let it be observed that the chief miracle connected with Christianity, the only one for the truth of which Christianity must answer with its life is the Resurrection, and it is just here that the moral certainty is greatest. All efforts to account for the origin and growth of the Church are unavailing which discredit this supreme occurrence. The Apostles staked everything upon it and went to their death in vindication of their affirmation that they had seen the Risen Christ with their own eyes. Perhaps few who have not studied the matter realize how strong is the evidence and how converging the lines of proof bearing upon this great fact. Of course, if anyone starts with the assumption that miracles are impossible there is nothing farther to say. But few even among scientific men venture to go so far. Huxley himself did not deny that miracles could happen. He said it was all a matter of evidence. As to the other miracles recorded in the New Testament, while the external evidence for them is not so strong, it may certainly be affirmed that they are congruous to the character of Christ as portrayed by the Evangelists. It may indeed be that some of the occurrences, such as the healings

credited to Christ, are explicable in accordance with the principles of modern therapeutics, and that others, such as the wasting away of the fig tree, the penny in the fish's mouth and the turning of water into wine, represent phases of moral teaching which later assumed a concrete expression in the guise of actual fact. These are mere suppositions which I do not myself accept. The Personality of Christ is so marvellous that nothing the Evangelists allege of Him seems incredible to me but all falls into proper perspective.

What we have to realize in all our study of the New Testament is that we have set forth in its pages an interpretation of Christ in the terms of the thought of His day. His life and actions are recorded for us by fallible men under historic and imperfect conditions. That human error and limitations are not absent from the narrative may be granted without impugning the substantial truth of the Gospel. The form may be faulty as all the work of men is, but nevertheless there stands forth from the pages of the New Testament a Figure of surpassing greatness, holiness and majesty. The Gospel within the Gospels, the true Word of God, constitutes the *raison d'etre* of the Scriptures. The extraneous elements, the elements that tell of human limitation, may be disregarded for the sake of the divine revelation which is mingled with them. If

divine truth and human error can co-exist side by side in the New Testament it is because the conditions of the manifestation of God to mankind in Jesus Christ pertain to this material earth and find their sphere of operation in human history. Infallibility in the Scriptures we have not, that does not belong to any work of men's hands, but to every faithful and devout soul as he ponders the Gospel story and strives to live in accordance with the sublime teachings of Christ, there will be vouchsafed an inner conviction of the truth which leads to salvation.

I have now very frankly set before you, in the present sermon and the one previously delivered, a view of the Bible which is in accordance with the critical though reverent scholarship of the day, a view which fully commends itself to my own mature judgment. I will not conceal from you that I long hesitated to abandon the old traditional view as sacred to me from early training and association. When the significance of the modern critical method began to dawn upon me my first impulse was to reject it as disquieting to faith and subversive of the doctrine of inspiration, but a deeper study of the subject and a conviction forced upon me from many quarters of the reasonableness of the conclusions compelled a final assent and taught me to bring this new knowledge I had acquired into harmony

with the essential truth of Christianity. I am far from urging you to adopt the view which I have found so illuminating. My only object has been so to present the matter that those among you to whom the old ways of thinking about the Bible have proved unsatisfactory and perhaps a stumbling block to faith, may find a method of reconciliation and preserve for themselves a belief in the essential verities of Revealed Religion. In newspapers, in magazine articles, in pamphlets and in books the traditional view of the Scriptures is being widely discredited, and it seems to me high time that the official teachers of Christianity should take public cognizance of the fact and give their people the knowledge they themselves possess, indicating moreover how it is possible to adjust religion to it.

If the Bible is to continue to be read and studied profitably by intelligent people it must be done with understanding. To continue to claim for it a character which the facts do not warrant will do infinite harm. The one fatal thing against which I desire strongly to protest is the tendency to dismiss the Bible as unworthy of interest because a vague impression has been received that criticism has pronounced its doom. The real students of the Bible do not talk thus. Rather are its pages illuminated for them with a brighter light. The deeper the knowledge they possess the keener is the interest

they feel. After all criticism concerns itself only with the earthen vessel, it does not and cannot affect the treasure contained in it. The treasure is Jesus Christ and the revelation made in His Person of the one true God.

THE BASIS OF RECONSTRUCTION

SERMON IV.

THE BASIS OF RECONSTRUCTION.

Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins else the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins perish, but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins and both are preserved.

St. Matt. IX., v. 17.

Those of you who have followed the arguments and considerations advanced in the preceding sermons will hardly need to have the fact further emphasized that Christianity is now passing through a great crisis, perhaps the greatest in its history. In my first sermon I gave many reasons why I believe this to be the case and I need not reiterate them now. In affirming that there is a crisis I use the term advisedly and with no intention of indulging in mere rhetoric or sensationalism. It is in no spirit of pessimism that I have ventured to present conditions in the religious sphere as they appear to my mind. It is not pessimism to state plain facts, however unpleasant they may be to contemplate. The physician who pronounces his patient to be in an alarming condition is not a pessimist unless he makes such statement upon insufficient evidence.

It would seem to be amply proved for thinking

people that former theological conceptions are no longer adequate, that a restatement of religion and a readjustment of theological ideas is essential for this age if Christianity is to retain its power and make any further progress in the world. With traditional theories in regard to the Bible, the Church and Christian institutions losing their authority over men's minds as the result of the converging rays of modern knowledge, the need for a new basis upon which to rear again the Christian structure becomes apparent. What we are called upon to do is so to present the essential truths of Christianity that they may be recognized as exercising a rightful authority over the hearts and consciences of religious people. I emphasize the phrase "religious people" because it is only to such that our appeal lies. Christianity has always failed to enlist the allegiance of certain classes because its moral and spiritual elements found so little or no response in them. Many in all ages of the world have rejected Christianity, not exclusively or chiefly because of the intellectual difficulties involved in its acceptance, but rather because of the practical claims which it asserts over the life and conduct. An attitude of negation or antagonism is assumed owing to an unwillingness to make the supreme moral effort which faith demands. It is altogether too much to hope that any conceivable reconstruction of Christianity would re-

sult in a reversal of attitude in such cases. The religious sense is lacking or no pains have been taken to cultivate it. There is no desire to effect any real change in the life, no yearning for spiritual things, no impulse to surrender the will and affections to a great Ideal. In a former age when the Church was the dominant power in human society the vast major ity conformed outwardly to its teaching and regulations, indeed it was dangerous to do otherwise. But as the principle of religious toleration grew and the State refused any longer to enforce ecclesiastical conformity upon its subjects, those whose prepossessions and inclinations were opposed to the religious idea, being thus relieved of any outward necessity, definitely forsook Christianity or lapsed into mere nominal adherence to it. To-day, with all civil and social pressure absent, religion is compelled to stand solely upon its own intrinsic merits and hence only those to whom religion makes a spiritual appeal are concerned to accept it. This is surely a great gain, for, while the number of professing Christians may be and probably is greatly diminished, those who still acknowledge its sanctions may be presumed to do so from sincere motives. What the present age is seeing is a great winnowing process, a sharp line of cleavage establishing itself between the religious and non-religious, in Scriptural language, "the sheep and the goats."

Our concern in the present crisis is not with those who have no mind to accept Christianity, but rather with those whom the religious chaos has intellectually confused and who are in imminent peril of drifting away from religion because it seems to them that the foundations have given way. That there are multitudes of good men and women, sincere lovers of truth and naturally disposed to accept Christianity, who are at present alienated partly or wholly from the Church and organized religion generally cannot be questioned. They would like to believe but they cannot. They are in close touch with modern ideas. They are thinkers and readers and feel that the knowledge they have acquired in other departments of thought is irreconcilable with the old traditional view of religion. They keenly feel their spiritual isolation and would eagerly welcome any plan whereby they could co-ordinate religion with the other truths which they accept. They desire above all else to be honest in such matters and cannot bring themselves to accept as true the conventional language of Christian doctrine and experience. They acknowledge the spiritual grandeur of Christ's character and the inspiration of His personality and life. With His moral and spiritual teaching they are in hearty accord. They would like to be definitely enrolled as His disciples, but they shrink from making affirmations which violate their sense of truth. A

few such are still found in our churches, but the vast majority have given over any conformity to institutional Christianity, and fall back upon their private and personal devotions as the only alternative left them. Surely the case of such is most pathetic. Inwardly they have the Christian mind and temper but outwardly they are severed from the Christian Society. If as we may well believe such belong to the Soul of the Church, it is yet surely to be counted a great misfortune that they are not reckoned active members of its Body.

Can nothing be done for these or must antiquated and discredited theological assumptions be permitted to stand in the way of their return? Has not the time arrived for a restatement of Christian truth in terms that are in harmony with the enlarged conceptions of this new era? Must not the new wine which is now actively fermenting be put into new wine skins? In physical science we are all now willing to give up our theories and to take our instruction from demonstrated facts. We look upon nature with other eyes than men of former days, why not so equally in the case of religion? Where everything has changed shall we deem it possible to confine religion to the old categories? The weapons and military science of a past age are futile in modern warfare and are discarded for others of proved efficiency. The modern battleship when it goes into

action is stripped of everything superfluous, so in the contest against the forces of evil and unbelief is it not imperative for the Church to cast aside the excrescences and accretions that have attached themselves to religion during the course of the centuries, and while conserving the essential truths for which it must ever stand, frankly thrown overboard the useless and the obsolete?

We ought to be able to think of the Church as the great home of Truth, as freely hospitable to every contribution which the mind of man has made to the cause of knowledge and progress. Too often in the popular estimation, it is to be feared, the Church by its tardy recognition of new forms of truth is rather regarded as presenting a formidable obstacle to its recognition than as its chief patron and advocate. I am not suggesting any definite programme for adoption. I am not so presumptuous as to suppose that it lies with me or with any group of individuals to point out the remedy for the existing chaos. I am merely concerned now to indicate what I believe should be the general attitude of the Church in face of the crisis which confronts it. I am appealing for a frank recognition on the Church's part of the results of modern criticism. The first and obvious thing to do is to accept the facts which a conservative and reverent scholarship has established and to preserve an open and candid mind as to those points

which are yet unsettled. I do not mean, of course, that the Church should hastily place its imprimatur upon any of these things, far less press them upon the acceptance of its members, but it should certainly be willing to allow the greatest liberty to the individual consistent with a loyal assent to fundamental doctrines. To continue to bind the conscience of the individual to obsolete theological formularies in the very teeth of evidence which plainly proves their inadequacy or their mistaken basis is the height of folly, and the reaction is certain to be disastrous. The Christian Church in a former day had some bitter lessons as to the unwisdom of denying scientific facts in the realm of nature which subsequently were clearly demonstrated to be true, and it ought to profit by such an experience. That the Church has from time to time in the past been forced to adjust its teachings to a new order of things is a sure fact of history. The simple and unsystematic teaching of the Apostles was worked out into exact formulas by the aid of a terminology supplied by Greek dialectics, and the result was stereotyped for us in the decrees of Church Councils and further elaborated in patristic theology. The philosophy underlying these statements was valid for that time but has largely become unmeaning for us to-day. What we require is a fresh statement of old truths which will satisfy the wider and more exact knowledge which

we now possess. Some things undoubtedly will have to be abandoned which were once thought essential but nothing which really touches the core of Christianity need be surrendered.

Take the Creed for example. I judge it will not be necessary to alter a single word and the reason for this is because in the process of time the statements of the Creed have come to mean something vastly different for us than they did for those who originally framed them. Take the first Article, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." What a tremendous difference exists between the conception of the Divine Being and His attributes held in the Fourth, the Twelfth and even the Sixteenth Century and that which we hold to-day in the Twentieth. When the earth was believed to be the center of the universe and the heavenly bodies were thought of as especially created in the interest of man God was conceived of as a great Master Mechanic, a Supreme Artificer, who by His fiat caused everything to spring into immediate existence in its finally completed form. To-day with the flood of light which physical science has thrown upon the subject we necessarily have ideas of God, of nature and of the methods of creation that surpass in splendor and majesty the wildest dreams of the ancients. We repeat the same time-honored words but they are fraught to us with a significance which language is

incapable of expressing. By the concept, "God," we understand a Being whose vision sweeps through billions of worlds and whose Spirit is the vital principle immanent in myriad forms of life of which our forefathers could have had no conception.

Take another article of the Creed, "He descended into hell." Hell, or the abode of departed spirits, as formerly conceived, was an actual place situated somewhere in the interior of the earth. We dismiss such an idea as childish and refuse to think of the matter under any geographical aspect. Take still another Article, "He ascended into heaven." To us there is no up or down as far as the position of the earth is concerned. It simply swims in space and heaven like hell has for us no local significance. To have asserted in a former age, these, to us, obvious truths, would have been regarded as heresy, whereas to-day such views are consistent with the strictest orthodoxy. What we have done with the Creed is simply to treat it as a living document and to interpret it in the light of current knowledge and accepted philosophy. We do the like or ought to do so with all other doctrines where they will bear such interpretation.

As to the deep mysteries of religion, and religion let me remind you would not be religion without them, there ought to be no rigid dogmatizing, no attempt to define them in any hard and fast way. Such

doctrines as the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Trinity are not susceptible of philosophical or logical explanation and every attempt to treat them thus plunges the mind into deeper perplexity. We must hold to the truth which underlies these doctrines but we need not press upon the intellect any theory as to their nature and operation. Certainly the speculations in regard to them indulged in by a former generation may be put aside as invalid for our own.

As to the miraculous elements in revelation surely it may be said that any special interpretation of them does not constitute the chief ground upon which to build faith or to expect salvation. What, for instance, do we or can we know as to the mysterious operations of Divine Omnipotence in the realm of nature or history? The process is hidden from our comprehension. The Resurrection of Christ is a fundamental tenent of the Christian faith, the fact is guaranteed to us by Apostolic testimony and above all by the existence of the Christian Church, but all theories as to the mode of His survival and the conditions surrounding His post-resurrection appearances are matters of speculation. The great truth for faith is that the Christ we believe in is a Living Christ who by His Spirit continually abides and energizes in His Body the Church. St. Paul himself seems to have laid small stress upon the aspects of Our Lord's earthly career. For him it was the

transcendent and heavenly Christ rather than the historic Jesus who was the true object of Christian faith. "Even though," he says, "we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more."

The Christian Church exists to testify to Jesus Christ and for the moral, social, religious and spiritual good of mankind. It ought to open its doors to every soul who by individual conviction and faith recognizes a Living Christ as supreme Lord and Master and who is willing to conform the life to the principles which He enunciated. It should be recognized moreover that the Church as a visible corporate Society distinct from the world has the right to expect compliance with a few simple rules and ordinances. No society can hold together and do its work unless it can secure recognition of its authority and the obedience of its members in practical ways.

If neither the Church nor the Bible is infallible, in the sense of immunity from human error and limitation, both at least may be thought of as credible witnesses to religious truth and sufficient guides for moral action. The seat of ultimate spiritual authority can be placed nowhere else than in the enlightened conscience of the individual Christian informed by the Corporate Mind of the whole Body of believers. If the individual finds himself in conflict

in essential matters with the mind of the universal Church as expressed in the Scriptures and the Creeds he would do well to distrust his own conclusions and attempt to revise his views with the object of bringing them into harmony with the main stream of faith and practice. We are only beginning to understand the psychology of the Corporate Mind and to recognize its proper function as the arbitrator of discordant elements. Individualism as a philosophy of life, as a method of attaining truth and of eliminating error is now widely discredited.

Men should not be excluded from Christian fellowship for mere opinions so long as they are content to give a general assent to Church teaching. Men live peacefully under the same civil government while holding different views as to its proper functions and policy. Their citizenship does not depend upon their opinions but upon their legal status. Thus the basis of Church membership is not to be conceived of as resting upon personal views as to the interpretation of this doctrine or that, but rather upon a recognized status. In our own branch of the Catholic Church there are those holding Calvinistic and Arminian views, high sacramentarians and low sacramentarians, men who make the Incarnation the center of teaching and others who make the Atonement such, sacerdotalists and anti-sacerdotalists, those who like Divine Service celebrated with

all the adjuncts of traditional symbolism and ceremonial and others who prefer a service of strict simplicity. All are equally members of the same Body and find their differences no ground for separation or as affording any just cause of offence. Nature teaches us that the completest unity is compatible with the greatest variety. Indeed variety is a sign of abundant life while mere uniformity as distinct from essential unity suggests a low grade of organism.

I have endeavored to place before you in these sermons some considerations which I humbly trust may be found helpful in the case of those who are troubled over the chaotic state through which religious thought is now passing. I am well aware how fragmentary the presentation of the matter must seem to you. Perhaps a frank confession that I myself am in the position of one groping his way in the intellectual confusion which has fallen alike upon all of us may serve as my apology for speaking of these high matters. I am fain to believe, and this is my reason for treating these themes, that considerations which have proved helpful in my own case may serve a like purpose in yours.

To forecast the future of religion and religious thought is given to no man. I may at least, however, express my own strong conviction that out of all this ferment of thought and chaos of conflicting opinions

there will ultimately emerge a new synthesis that will include all the essential elements of Historic Christianity, which will at once satisfy the intellect, commend itself to the conscience, nourish the emotions and inspire the affections. We shall not believe in all ways exactly as our fathers did. The new wine must be put in new wine skins; Divine Truth will be preserved, though the old vessels having served their purpose in their day, but now proved useless, will be permitted to perish.

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